

CITIZENS COMMITTEE FOR MICHIGAN STATE PARKS

Wednesday, May 28, 2008

Hoffmaster State Park

Lansing, Michigan

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Murdock Jemerson, Chair
Tom Ferguson, Vice Chair
April Bennett
James Bradley
Betsy Clark
Mike Foote
Jim Hendricks
Robert Hoffmeyer
Mike McDonald
Chuck Nelson
Mary Pitcher
Bill Rose
Todd Scott
Marne Smiley

MEMBERS ABSENT

Rev. Hurley Coleman, Jr.
Kathy Lewand
Chris Graham

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Mary Brown
Sandra Clark
Bill, for Duncan

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Michael Bryanton

DNR STAFF PRESENT

Ron Olson, Chief, DNR Parks and Recreation (PRD)
Vicki Anthes, PRD
George Cameron, PRD
Tony Herek, PRD
Harold Herta, PRD
Yolanda Taylor, PRD
Other PRD Staff

INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Murdock Jemerson called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm. He gave special thanks to Rollie Johnson, the Parks and Recreation Division's Plainwell District Supervisor, Pat Whalen, the Grand Haven State Park Supervisor, and Charlie Ehrlich, the Hoffmaster State Park Supervisor, for the toilet/shower dedication ceremony at Grand Haven State Park, the tour of Hoffmaster State Park, and for making all the tour, lunch and meeting arrangements for the Citizens Committee meeting. Rollie introduced the park staff, and Christa Sturtevant-Roesly,

who manages the Central Reservation System, and Myra Lee, a MSU Scholar's Program student working with the Parks and Recreation Division.

Chair Jemerson also introduced the two new members to the Citizens Committee --- April Bennett with the Michigan United Conservation Clubs, and Marne Smiley, Executive Director of the Michigan Mountain Biking Association.

PORCUPINE MOUNTAIN MUSIC FESTIVAL

Jim Bradley, Committee member and President of the Friends of the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park, gave a brief overview of the upcoming Music Festival, which is scheduled in August, and showed clips from last year's festival.

PUBLIC APPEARANCES

There were no public appearances.

ISLAND LAKE SHOOTING RANGE UPDATE

Dennis Knapp, Acting Assistant Resource Management Deputy, was present to give the Committee a brief history and update on the Island Lake Shooting Range, and to address the concerns of the local citizens and residents regarding the noise levels from the shooting range. Dennis gave an overview of preliminary meetings that occurred, with local officials and the general public, including the formation of a citizen's advisory committee, during the planning process for the placement and construction of the shooting range. After the shooting range was installed, residents that owned property near the shooting range started complaining about the noise.

In 2004, consultants and experts were brought in to test the noise levels due to complaints being received by local residents. They did not find the shooting range in violation of any local noise ordinances, but did offer the alternatives of placing berms or sound barriers to help deafen some of the noise. As barriers were being erected and installed, the Department was taken to court by local citizens for violation of local noise ordinances. It took almost 3 years, but the case was eventually dismissed against the Department as local ordinances are not applicable to state government. The concessionaire, however, remained on trial. The judge visited the shooting range, found the range not to be a nuisance and the case was dismissed.

Dennis commented that the shooting range is very popular for clay and skeet shooting, and the use of this facility continues to grow each year. The nearest residence is $\frac{3}{4}$ mile away, and most of the complaints come from a residential area that is north of the freeway in Brighton Township, about $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles away from the shooting range. He also commented that there are only about a dozen of residents that still complain, but they also admit that the noise from the shooting range varies on some days versus others.

Regardless of the outcome, the Department still wanted to offer some short-term relief to the nearby residents, so they reduced some hours of operation and close the shooting range on 7 major holidays. The Department is planning to bring in another consultant during the month of June to do a station-by-station assessment, and offer their ideas and recommendations on how the Department can continue to operate the shooting range, but still offer some additional relief to the residents.

The Committee thanked Dennis for providing an update on this issue. No further discussions occurred, and no further action was requested by the Committee.

MINUTES

Mary Pitcher offered an amendment to the March 28, 2008 Minutes, under Subcommittee Reports. She asked that the following sentence be added to the Minutes, and the Resolution, regarding the rezoning of 98 acres within the Fort Custer Recreation Area:

“The revised dedicated boundary encompasses the potential of adding 98,000 acres to the state park and recreation system.”

There were no additional discussions, amendments or opposition to the March 28, 2008 Minutes. Betsy Clark motioned to approve the Minutes with the amendment; Mary Pitcher seconded the motion; and the March 28, 2008 Minutes were approved and adopted by the Committee.

STATUS OF LONG-TERM SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

Chuck Nelson, Chair of the Finance Subcommittee, gave a brief overview on the status of long-term sustainable funding. The Committee had a general discussion on what steps and contacts have been made so far, and further discussed the follow-up and next steps that the Committee should take to increase awareness and interest in their proposal. Chuck stated that he will contact the Secretary of State to begin discussions with them.

Chair Jemerson reported that the Legislative Workgroup on Long-Term Sustainable Funding for the DNR has started to meet, and that he will be meeting with various legislators and Lansing area representatives in the near future to further discuss funding alternatives.

Chuck commented that this Committee needs to follow-up with their contacts by sending them a letter, along with the proposal. Chuck offered to make contact with the Secretary of State to begin discussions with them, and will get information regarding the outcome of his discussions regarding the use of registration fees to this Committee for their additional information. He added that timing is of the essence, and this Committee needs to be prepared and ready.

April Bennett commented that she will try to get this on the upcoming MUCC Convention's Agenda for presentation.

Chuck also commented that somebody also needs to contact and inform the State Forest Advisory Committee.

Updates on each member's progress will be reported at the next Committee meeting.

PARKS AND RECREATION REPORTS AND UPDATES

Good Things

Ron Olson, DNR Parks and Recreation Chief, announced that a Gas Saving Storage Program was just launched by the Parks and Recreation Division. It was well received by the press, and will know how successful it is as time goes on. He will provide an update at the next Committee meeting.

Ron handed out a summary on the Racing for Wildlife initiative and the partnership with The Ryan Newman Foundation, The Conservation Fund, MUCC, and the Michigan International Speedway to renovate and reopen the youth camp at Mill Lake, which is located within the Waterloo Recreation Area. A special celebrity event is being scheduled for the June race at MIS in Brooklyn, Michigan, and another event will be scheduled for the August race to draw support. The MUCC will run the Mill Lake and Cedar Lake camps, but there will also be an oversight committee established. The plan is to dedicate approximately 26 weeks per year towards educational programs. The remaining weeks would be available for families, or groups, to rent.

Ron also announced that the Michigan Harbors Guide was recently updated, with help from a sport fisheries grant, and each Committee member should have received one in the mail.

Ron gave a brief update on urban outreach initiatives, and mentioned that ministers from Flint, Saginaw, Bay City, and other surrounding areas, just completed a tour of 5 state recreation areas. They participated in canoeing and other recreational activities to gain hands-on experience at each recreation area. Their intent is to go back to their congregations to discuss and consider future bus tours, weekend camping events, etc. at some of these state recreation areas.

Ron also provided a handout of the numerous, urban outreach initiatives and accomplishments that have been made by Gary Williams, the MSU Extension Services Educator and Resources Outreach Coordinator. Gary is closely involved with Department-related events and outreach initiatives.

PRD Strategic Planning Update

Vicki Anthes, PRD Planning Section Chief, gave a brief update on the status of PRD's Strategic Planning. She reported that they recently met with the PRD Management Team and has adopted the goals and objectives. They will now move forward by identifying specific tasks and disbursing them to various teams that have been established for action. She commented that they will come back to this Committee in early fall to give an update on their progress.

Legislative Updates

Harold Herta, PRD Resource Management Section Chief, gave a brief overview of legislation that is currently passing through the House and/or Senate, and has an effect on the state parks system's programs or operations.

The commercial filming legislation created a lot of interest in filming in state parks and recreation areas, but they would be required to seek our approval, abide by the laws, and be charge for direct costs, such as staff time.

Mike McDonald, Committee member, gave a brief update on The Nature Conservancy's proposal to amend the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. He mentioned that it is on the fast track, and their goal is that it will go to the August primary. He passed out a letter that went out this morning from the MRPA President, expressing to Senator Birkholz their desire to work with them on this legislation if it is going to include some sort of strategic planning effort regarding bonding authority. Ron Olson commented that this proposal has raised a lot of concerns, and the Director recently addressed this issue at a legislative committee hearing. Ron said he will obtain a copy of the Director's testimony and share it with the Committee.

Mike also gave a brief update on the recently introduced bottle container bill, Senate Bill 29. No action has been taken on this bill, but he mentioned that some cities are already starting to ban them.

Harold closed by stating that budget deliberations should be completed before this summer.

Land Issues

Ron Olson commented that the Eight Point Lake acquisition was recently approved by the Michigan State Waterways and Natural Resources Commission, and that this acquisition was quite an accomplishment.

PARKS AND RECREATION PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL REPORTS

Ron Olson gave a brief overview of PRD's financial and performance reports, and the monthly budget report that is submitted to the Natural Resources Commission every month. He did mention that some of the tables highlight camping trends, going back to 1994. Ron mentioned that he hopes revenues and campnights will continue to remain up, but with the rising gas prices, there is concern for the remainder of the year.

Tony Herek, PRD Program Services Section Chief, mentioned that the Capital Outlay bill is moving through the house, but he is not sure about the status of the Bond List. He will provide an update to the Committee at the next meeting, or as information is received.

There were no additional questions or comments regarding these reports.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

No other subcommittees met and there was nothing to report.

However, Harold Herta did mention that the Michigan State Park Guide is in the process of being updated. They re-partnered with General RV and it is at the printer. General Dynamics, a company that markets and manufactures military vehicles and equipment, recently purchased 350 annual motor vehicle state park entrance permits for its employees. Ron passed out the most recent version of the comment cards and asked that the Committee review and e-mail their comments/edits to him as soon as possible.

CLOSING COMMENTS/NEXT MEETING/LOCATION

Chair Jemerson asked the Committee where they would like to hold their next meeting, and the Committee decided to hold it at the Rifle River Recreation Area on July 30th. Chair Jemerson asked if there were any further comments or business, none were offered, and the meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.